

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 12630 162218Z

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

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R 162207Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9531

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION USBERLIN

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, FR

SUBJ: CIVAIR: PAN AM WEST BERLIN - FRANCE CHARTER

REF: STATE 112553

1. PANAM INFORMS US THAT GOF SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION (SGAC) ON MAY 14 GAVE ORAL AUTHORIZATION FOR WEST BERLIN-PARIS CHARTERS THROUGH THIS MONTH BUT HAD INDICATED FALL PROGRAM COULD NOT BE APPROVED. REASON GIVEN, ACCORDING PANAM, WAS NOT ONLY COMPETITION FOR AIR FRANCE SCHEDULED SERVICE BUT BECAUSE THIS WAS "FIFTH FREEDOM" CHARTER TRAFFIC.

2. WE SOUGHT CLARIFICATION FROM MME. THOMASSET, OF SGAC, WHO IS IN CHARGE OF CHARTER AUTHORIZATIONS THERE AND IS GOF OFFICIAL WITH WHOM PANAM--AND BRITISH--HAD BEEN DEALING THIS SUBJECT. SHE STRESSED THAT PROBLEM WAS NOT ONE OF WEST BERLIN-FRANCE TRAFFIC BUT SPECIFICALLY WEST BERLIN-PARIS, AND SHE RECALLED THAT SGAC HAD READILY APPROVED AEROAMERICA CHARTERS WEST BERLIN-CORSICA (PARIS 5087, STATE 46874). PROBLEM WITH WEST BERLIN-PARIS TRAFFIC, SHE SAID, WAS THAT AIR FRANCE HAD WEEKLY SERVICE OPERATED ON SUNDAYS

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PAGE 02 PARIS 12630 162218Z

WITH CARAVELLE EQUIPMENT. THIS WAS

PRESTIGE ROUTE FOR AIR FRANCE AND BOTH GOF AND AIR FRANCE WERE CONCERNED BECAUSE OF VERY LOW LOAD FACTORS ON THIS ROUTE. LOW LOAD FACTOR WAS ATTRIBUTED IN LARGE PART TO FACT THAT LAKER AND THEN PANAM EACH OPERATED TWICE WEEKLY ITC FLIGHTS BETWEEN WEST BERLIN AND PARIS THAT TOOK MUCH OF THE BUSINESS. GOF HAD AUTHORIZED SPECIAL REDUCED "CULTURAL" TARIFF FOR GROUP TRAVEL BY TEN OR MORE PERSONS IN ORDER TO ATTRACT MORE BUSINESS TO AIR FRANCE, BUT THIS HAD NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN MAKING INROADS ON CHARTER TRAFFIC. MME. THOMASSET MADE NO REFERENCE TO "FIFTH FREEDOM" QUESTION.

3. LAKER HAD INAUGURATED TWICE WEEKLY CHARTER FLIGHTS AND WAS THE REAL VILLAIN, INDICATED MME. THOMASSET, BUT AS RESULT REFUSAL AUTHORIZATION FOR CONTINUATION LAKER PROGRAM SGAC HAD FELT COMPELLED ALSO REFUSE PANAM PROGRAM. NONETHELESS, SGAC HAD APPROVED PANAM FLIGHTS THROUGH MAY 25. MME. THOMASSET STRESSED THAT SGAC POSITION DOES NOT MEAN THAT GOF IS CLOSING DOOR ENTIRELY ON WEST BERLIN-PARIS CHARTER TRAFFIC; RATHER, SGAC IS TRYING TO REGULATE TRAFFIC SO THAT AIR FRANCE SCHEDULED SERVICE GETS MORE OF THE BUSINESS. WHEN WE ASKED WHY AIR FRANCE DID NOT ITSELF GET INTO WEST BERLIN-PARIS CHARTER BUSINESS IF IT WAS SO LUCRATIVE, SHE SAID THAT AIR FRANCE HAD NO INTEREST IN SUCH CHARTER OPERATIONS AND, MOREOVER, CHARTER SERVICE WOULD SIMPLY COMPETE WITH ITS SCHEDULED SERVICE. WE TOOK NOTE OF MME. THOMASSET'S EXPLANATIONS AND DID NOT COMMENT IN ABSENCE OF INSTRUCTIONS.

4. DURING RCAA'S ABSENCE ON LEAVE LAST WEEK BRITISH EMBASSY HAD QUERIED US THIS SUBJECT, SUGGESTING THAT JOINT DEMARCHE TO SGAC BE ENVISAGED IN DEFENSE OF LAKER AND PANAM INTERESTS. WE HAVE NOT FURTHER CONTACTED BRITISH EMBASSY, SINCE WE ARE NOT SURE WHETHER LAKER FLIGHTS HAVE BEEN AUTHORIZED THROUGH MAY AS HAVE THOSE OF PANAM. WE BELIEVE THAT ANY CONTACTS WITH BRITISH THIS SUBJECT HAD BEST BE CARRIED OUT VIA AMEMBASSY LONDON THAN VIA BRITISH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 PARIS 12630 162218Z

EMBASSY HERE.

5. EMBASSY SUGGESTS DEPT. RAISE THIS QUESTION NEXT WEEK WITH ABRAHAM AND ESPEROU OF SGAC DURING THEIR VISIT TO WASHINGTON IF IT IS DESIRED TO PURSUE IT WITH FRENCH AUTHORITIES.
RUSH

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